

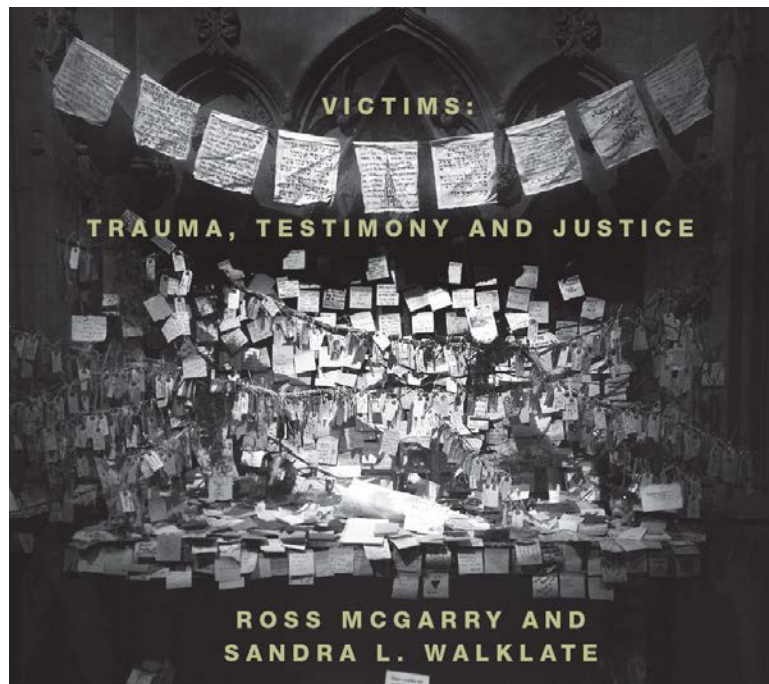
From Crime to Culture: Is there a case for a cultural victimology?

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The purpose of this paper: to further a conversation



1. Reflections on victimological theory/concepts
2. Thinking about the victimologist as witnessing and bearing witness?

H. Becker (1986: 143)
Where do we situate our observation post?



Tracing victimological thought

- Using three conceptual pillars (trauma, testimony, justice) it is possible to trace different strands within victimological thought:
- Positivist
- Radical
- Critical

Parallel with criminology: in each concept of victim contested with different understandings of choice, suffering, and power relations.

Like criminology, some recent interventions suggest the entry of the cultural in victimology: Furedi (1997), Valier (2004), Mythen (2007), Ferrell et. al. (2008).

The foregrounding of suffering.

Mediated 'suffering' or is there more?



9/11 effect (Roach 2011)

Impact beyond the immediacy of the event (Howie, 2012)

Suffering behind our backs

The problem of the westo-centric lens (de Sousa Santos, 2014)

Tracing the influence of 'suffering'

What is cultural about this?

1. the fashion for suffering? Empathy as pathogenic (Fassin 2012: 26)
2. Individual/collective experiences of victimisation and its aftermath shared with family, friends or symbolised publicly.
3. Intermeshing with criminal justice policy

Thus, McEvoy and Jamieson (2007: 425) can comment:

'Suffering has become reshaped, commodified, and packaged for its public and didactic salience'.

Or as Fassin (2012: 222) the formation of victim subjectivities with political consequences have become conflated with what people think and feel.

But: is there a case for a cultural victimology?

- Is there a case for a cultural criminology? (See inter alia O'Brien, 2005; Spencer 2010).
- What would the conceptual framework of a cultural victimology look like? Need to look outside of contemporary victimological preoccupations with measurement as though that equated with experience.
- Back to the question of observation post?
- Adds an interesting and important dimension to critical victimology, so long as we remain witness to:
 - 1. claims to suffering are political
 - 2. that do not necessarily deny individual/collective suffering but neither can they 'know' what either of the latter look/feel like
 - 3. and what of the global context? Whose suffering counts under what conditions?

Cover Image of Trinity Church

- it is important to set apart the complexities of the 'witness' from the simple onlooker. That is to differentiate 'witnessing' from 'bearing witness'. The former is what we 'see' (such as the symbolic and figurative observations of victims and their experiences), and the latter involves 'seeing beyond what we see' (including the State's political reaction to victimising events such as terrorist attacks). In doing so 'witnessing' becomes an integral methodological tool for a visual victimology (Walklate, et al, 2014: 265).
- As such this image encourages us to see beyond what we 'see', in Spencer's (2010) terms, the altar is a space to think of the past but also to ponder the future.

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